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ABSTRACT

This technical assistance paper focuses on the transition of children with disabilities birth to three and their families from the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program for children ages birth to three to the Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities for children ages three to five. The information presented is consistent with the requirements for transition outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 1997. Presented in a question and answer format, information is provided on the following topics: (1) goals of the transition process; (2) eligibility for preschool services; (3) parent permission; (4) starting services; (5) initiating the transition process; (6) timing of the services; (7) recommended components of a transition interagency agreements and how agreements promote transition planning; (8) the purpose of the transition planning meeting; (9) participants of the transition planning meeting; (10) documentation; (11) participation of the early intervention primary service coordinator in the transition meeting; (12) use of the family support plan; (13) differences between the family support plan and the Individualized Education Program; (14) temporary assignments; and (15) options for providing uninterrupted services. An appendix includes a transition plan form. (CR)

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ED 457 609

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PAPER 10925

TRANSITION FROM THE INFANTS & TODDLERS EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM TO THE SCHOOL DISTRICT PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

PAPER # FY2001-8D

JANUARY 2001

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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PAPER 10925

Transition from the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program to the School District Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities

Introduction

This technical assistance paper focuses on the transition of children with disabilities birth to three and their families from the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program for children ages birth to three (Part C) to the Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities for children ages three to five (Part B). The information presented in this paper is consistent with the requirements for transition outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 1997, Public Law 105-17, effective June 4, 1997, and Title 34, Parts 300 and 303 of the Code of Federal Regulations, which were published on March 12, 1999. IDEA is referred to in this Technical Assistance Paper (TAP) as IDEA'97.

IDEA'97, Section 612(9), requires that "children participating in early intervention programs assisted under Part C, and who will participate in preschool programs under Part B, experience a smooth and effective transition to school district preschool programs." The law also states that by the child's third birthday, an individual educational plan (IEP) or a family support plan will be developed and implemented for the child. Each school district is required to participate in transition planning meetings arranged by the designated lead agency [Children's Medical Services (CMS)/Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program (EIP)] for those children who are potentially eligible for school district prekindergarten program services.

Based on findings from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs' 1997 review of the Florida Department of Education's (DOE) implementation of IDEA, Part B and CMS's implementation of Part C, procedures have not been effective in ensuring a smooth transition for children with disabilities from early intervention programs into preschool programs in public agencies in the state. The purpose of this technical assistance paper is to clarify school district (local education agency) and EIP responsibilities for ensuring a smooth transition for children with disabilities from the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program to the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities.

Paper Number: FY 2001-8D

January 2001

Division of Public Schools
and Community Education

Bureau of Instructional Support
and Community Services

Florida Department of Education

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EC 308615

Questions and Answers

Transition Process

1. **What does transition from the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program (Part C) to the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities (Part B) mean?**

Transition relates to the progression of a child from one environment or program to another. Many young children who have been provided services from the early intervention program will need to transition to school district special education services. The transition process is initiated by the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program at least six months to one year before the child's third birthday. The process includes formal transition planning that provides the family with all necessary information to make decisions regarding future placement, includes procedures to prepare the child for changes in service delivery, and, with the parent's consent, arranges for transmittal to the school district of information such as evaluation/assessment data and family support plan information. The process also includes the development of a transition plan so the transition proceeds in a timely, step-by-step manner. It is important that family members and professionals discuss their roles and expected levels of involvement in the upcoming transition. The transition process should fulfill the following goals:

- ensure continuity of services
- minimize disruption of the family system
- promote child functioning in the least restrictive environment
- promote collaboration, including planning, preparation, implementation, and evaluation within and between programs and with the family

2. **Do all children who receive services through the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program transition to the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities?**

No, not all children who have received services from the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program are eligible for the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities. Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program personnel, while providing up-to-date information on parental rights and responsibilities, must prepare families for the possibility that their child may not meet the eligibility criteria for special education services provided by the IDEA'97, Part B program. Families need assurance that all parties involved will strive to provide alternative program plans if their child's needs are not severe enough to be determined eligible for the IDEA'97, Part B program. Transition activities should enhance the family's awareness of resources and programs available. The school district may discuss a variety of options available within a community, including the public school Prekindergarten Early Intervention Program, Head Start, and community child care. Transition from the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program into any of these settings requires planning by a team that includes the family, the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program primary service coordinator, a representative from the local provider program or agency, and any other persons requested by the family through a transition planning meeting.

3. What if the parent does not want a referral made to the school district?

It is the responsibility of the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program primary service coordinator to work with the family to ensure that the transition planning meeting takes place.

The parent may choose at any point in time to withhold permission to send a referral to the school district. If this is the parent's choice, the primary service coordinator should make the family aware that a delay in referring the child to the school district could cause a delay in services being provided to the child. Meeting notes should reflect that this information was shared with the family and that other community options such as Head Start and community child care were considered. Efforts should be made to assist children and families who have been served in the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program but who are not eligible for school district prekindergarten services for children with disabilities to receive appropriate services.

4. When must the transition process from the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program to the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities or other providers begin?

The *Children's Medical Services Early Intervention Program Plan and Operations Guide* requires that transition activities be initiated by primary service coordinators for all children served by the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program at least six months to one year before the child's third birthday. The Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program primary service coordinators should notify the school district of children who will soon be turning three years of age and may be eligible for prekindergarten program services. Parent consent must be obtained prior to providing personally identifiable information to the school district. Transition needs and possibilities for services at age three should be discussed with the family in conjunction with the review or update of the family support plan. With the approval of the family, a transition planning meeting must be scheduled with the family, the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program primary service coordinator, the school district program representative if the child is potentially eligible for the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities, and/or other local providers/agencies at least 90 days (or at the discretion of all persons involved, up to six months) before the child turns three. The primary service coordinator should contact the school district to ensure that a representative will attend the transition planning meeting. This meeting will provide an opportunity for all involved to discuss program options for appropriate services that the child may receive beginning on the child's third birthday. Requirements for the transition process can be found in IDEA'97, Section 637(a)(8).

5. Who is responsible for initiating the transition process and what are the responsibilities of program staff?

The Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program primary service coordinator is responsible for initiating the transition process at least six months to one year before the child turns three. The primary service coordinator must (1) contact the parent to discuss transition and possible service options for children three years of age; (2) set up the transition meeting date and time; and, (3) obtain permission from the family to invite the school district representative, if the child

is potentially eligible for the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities or any other appropriate community providers. School district representatives and providers of other appropriate services must be invited if requested by the family. This meeting must be held with the approval of the family at least 90 days (or at the discretion of all parties involved, up to six months) before the child's third birthday. The transition process must be documented on the family support plan.

6. How should the transition process from the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program to the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities be planned to allow the school district enough time to have services in place by the child's third birthday?

Service needs must be planned in advance since school districts are required to provide services by the child's third birthday. Personnel of the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program and the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities are encouraged to work together to develop written transition interagency agreements that address all or some of the following:

- use by the school district of data from the Children's Registry and Information System (CHRIS) and the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program data base to assist in projecting program needs and services
- Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program procedures that specify a process for referring children who are potentially eligible for the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities to the school district, including establishing procedures that encourage conducting the transition planning meeting as early as possible before children turn age three
- use of a school district referral form by the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program when making the referral
- guidelines for use of existing Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program information and evaluation reports and information on eligibility requirements for the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities
- a process and procedures, agreed upon by the agencies, for the school district to notify the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program of the results of the eligibility staffing and individual educational plan or family support plan meetings. These proce dures will ensure the child is receiving services.

7. What are the recommended components of a transition interagency agreement and how does the agreement promote transition planning?

The development of a local transition interagency agreement is encouraged to document and formalize the process for collaboration and the provision of services within a community. Interagency agreements can help avoid gaps in services and promote congruence among transitions in the community.

A transition interagency agreement is a written document that indicates the willingness of two or more agencies to work in a collaborative manner to deliver a services or services to a specific

group or population. Responsibilities, timelines, and procedures for the delivery of services are delineated. It is recommended that a transition interagency agreement contain the following 10 components and reflect the procedural and timeline expectations of the sending and receiving agencies:

- purpose
- description of agencies involved
- requirements that impact the agreement
- definition of terms
- procedures for working together and timelines
- plan for implementation of agreement
- tools for monitoring and evaluation of agreement
- process for dealing with interagency disputes
- duration of agreement
- signatures and dates

Transition interagency agreements should be reviewed on a regular basis and updated as changes in services and other activities occur that impact the agreement.

Transition Planning Meeting

8. What is the purpose of the transition planning meeting?

The transition planning meeting is designed to help make the transition process a smooth one for the child, the family, and all others involved. It provides the opportunity for parents to get answers to their questions about future services and to become active participants in the transition process. A discussion of strategies to prepare the child and family for changes in service delivery, including steps to help the child adjust and function in a new setting, should occur at this time. A review of existing screening and evaluation information, identification of additional information or evaluations needed to determine eligibility for school district prekindergarten services, and informed consent to conduct evaluations may also be addressed at this meeting. During the transition meeting, a transition plan must be developed and documented on the transition plan page (Form E) of the family support plan to ensure continuity of services and delineate transition activities, responsible person or agency, funding resources, and anticipated date of completion of activities. A copy of the transition plan page and instructions for completion of the page are included in Appendix A.

9. Who must attend the transition planning meeting?

Participants in the transition planning meeting include, with the approval of the child's family, a representative of the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program, the school district designated representative (if the child is potentially eligible for the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities), and the family. Other appropriate providers such as Head Start and community child care, if indicated by the family, should also be invited.

If the child is not potentially eligible for school district services for prekindergarten children with disabilities or the family does not want a referral to the school district program, with the approval of the child's family, convene a meeting to include the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program; the family; and providers of other appropriate services in the community such as Head Start, Developmental Services, Prekindergarten Early Intervention, or community child care. This meeting will provide an opportunity to address the future need for services and resources for the child and provide the family with the information they need (e.g., eligibility and program options) to make decisions regarding activities and timelines that must occur to ensure a smooth transition at age three.

10. How must the transition planning meeting be documented?

Since the purpose of the transition planning meeting is to develop a plan for transition of the child and family, a transition plan page (Form E) is included as a part of the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program family support plan to document the process. The transition plan page is designed to provide the family support plan team with a planning tool that focuses specifically on actions related to the various transitions that infants and toddlers and their families experience. This page delineates (1) the date the transition plan is expected to be completed; (2) reason for transition; (3) potential program/placement/other options; and, (4) the events that must occur to make transition successful, including transition activity, responsible person or agency, funding resources, anticipated target date for each activity to be accomplished, and date the activity was completed. The signature page (Form F), also a part of the family support plan, is required to verify the family and others participated in the development of the transition plan. When the transition plan is developed, participants attending the transition planning meeting must sign the signature page. The signature page and instructions for completion of the page are included in Appendix B.

The family support plan team should discuss the type of assistance that the family may need to be prepared for the transition, the program options regarding future placements, eligibility requirements, opportunity for program visitation, how records and information will be transferred between agencies and what additional evaluations and assessment information may be needed (if any).

11. Can the transition planning meeting be the same as the individual educational plan (IEP) meeting?

No. The transition planning meeting must be held at least 90 days prior to the child's third birthday and the family must be given the opportunity to explore all possible placement options for their child. If the child is potentially eligible for school district prekindergarten program services for children with disabilities, a school district representative must attend the transition planning meeting. It is the responsibility of the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program designated staff to make the referral to the school district, with parent consent, in sufficient time to ensure that school district prekindergarten program services for children with disabilities begin at age three. The transition planning meeting is most appropriately held during regularly scheduled family support plan meetings (six-month review or annual update). School district staff shall

schedule a separate meeting to determine eligibility for the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities and to develop an IEP or a family support plan. The child's parent(s) or guardian(s) must be invited to attend the eligibility staffing and IEP or family support plan meeting. These activities must occur prior to the child's third birthday.

12. Should the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program primary service coordinator be invited to the district's individual educational plan/family support plan meeting for a child in transition?

Yes. Inviting the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program primary service coordinator provides continuity for the family and child in the transition process, and reflects best practice in this area. Additionally, the primary service coordinator can provide pertinent information and input at the meeting. If the primary service coordinator is unable to attend, the school district should send information to notify the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program of the results of the meeting. The transition interagency agreement should delineate this process, as agreed upon by the agencies, and procedures for follow-up responsibility of the school district to ensure children are receiving services.

Family Support Plan and Individual Educational Plan

13. Can the school district use a family support plan with children three through five years of age?

Yes. A school district may elect to use a family support plan in lieu of an individual educational plan, providing the school district has approved procedures in the district's Special Programs and Procedures (SP&P) document to use the family support plan and the family support plan content meets the requirements of IDEA'97 and Rule 6A-6.03029, FAC, Development of Family Support Plans for Children with Disabilities Ages Birth Through Five. If the school district uses the family support plan for children three through five years of age, the district is responsible for explaining in detail to the parents the differences between the family support plan and the IEP. To use the family support plan, the school district must obtain informed written consent from the parents and provide Part B procedural safeguards.

14. What are the differences between the family support plan and the individual educational plan (IEP)?

The family support plan, as required statewide by the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program for children birth to age three, is defined as the family-centered process to identify and organize both formal and informal resources that will assist families in reaching goals for their children and themselves. The required components of the family support plan are as follows:

- information on the current status of the child's development in the areas of health or medical (including vision and hearing), cognitive, communication, physical (gross and fine motor), social or emotional, and adaptive development
- information, with the concurrence of the family, on family concerns, priorities, and resources related to the enhancing the development of the family's child with disabilities

- a statement of the major outcomes expected to be achieved by the child and family, including criteria, procedures, and timelines used to determine the degree to which progress toward achieving the outcomes is being made and whether modifications or revisions of outcomes or services are needed
- a statement of the early intervention services and other services necessary to meet the unique needs of the child and family to achieve the identified outcomes, including the frequency, intensity, location, method of delivering services, and payment arrangements
- a statement of the natural environment in which early intervention services shall appropriately be provided, including a justification of the extent, if any, to which the services will not be provided in a natural environment
- projected dates for initiation of services and the anticipated duration of such services
- name of the primary service coordinator
- steps to be taken to support the transition of the child, upon reaching age three, to pre school services for children with disabilities or to other services that may be available, if appropriate

The IEP specifies the special education and related services the child will receive. The IEP is designed to facilitate progress by students with exceptionalities in appropriate curriculum, resulting in students achieving their identified school outcomes. The required components of an IEP are as follows:

- a statement of the present levels of educational performance and how the child's disability affects participation in appropriate activities
- a statement of measurable annual goals including benchmarks or short-term objectives related to participation in appropriate activities and meeting each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability
- a statement of special education and related services and supplementary aids and services
- a statement of the program modifications or supports for personnel
- a statement of the extent to which the child will participate in state or district-wide assessments and any modifications in the administration of State or district-wide assessments of the child's achievement that are needed in order for the child to participate in the assessment
- projected date for initiation, duration, location, and frequency of services and modifications
- an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate in activities with nondisabled children
- a statement of how the child's progress toward the annual goals will be measured and how parents will be regularly informed of their child's progress toward his or her annual goals

In addition, there are special factors as identified in Title 34, Section 300.346, Code of Federal Regulations, which must be considered by the IEP team.

Although the contents of the family support plan and IEP are similar, the family support plan focuses on the family and child and addresses services based on individual developmental out-

comes. The IEP focuses on the individual student and addresses educational outcomes of that student.

Service Delivery Options

15. How can the temporary assignment rule assist with transition of children with disabilities at age three?

Rule 6A-6.0334, FAC, Temporary Assignment of Transferring Exceptional Students, was created to ensure that students with exceptionalities moving into and within Florida public schools receive appropriate services in a timely manner. This rule defines a transferring exceptional student as "one who was previously enrolled as an exceptional student in another Florida public school or private school or agency program or an out-of-state public or private school or agency program and who is enrolling in a Florida school district." The Part C Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program is considered an "agency" program. Children who were previously enrolled in the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program, upon verification of previous program eligibility or assignment, may be temporarily assigned, with parental consent, to the appropriate Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities. If the child is being temporarily assigned, the individual educational plan or family support plan team must develop a temporary IEP or family support plan and determine temporary placement. Parental consent for temporary placement must be obtained. The school district then has up to six months to conduct the necessary evaluations to determine if the student is eligible for permanent assignment.

16. May a child turning three years of age within the school year receive prekindergarten services under Part B provided by the school district before that child's third birthday?

Yes. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for children who are identified by the Part C program close to the time of their third birthday or who will turn three during the school year, to be served by the school district with Part B prekindergarten disabilities program funds. School districts and Part C programs should confer about this as they design local policies and procedures and transition agreements. In this circumstance, the school district must ensure free and appropriate public education (FAPE) and the procedural safeguards of Part B would apply.

17. If a school district elects to serve children with disabilities under age three, do the Part C requirements still apply?

Yes, since Children's Medical Services is the lead agency responsible for the implementation of the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program, it is their obligation to serve all eligible children with disabilities, birth to age three, who qualify for services. School districts may be providers of Part C early intervention services for children below age three, but ultimate responsibility for ensuring the provision of services for children below the age of three lies with the Part C Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program.

18. What are the options for providing uninterrupted services to a child in transition from the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program to the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities during the summer?

IDEA'97, Section 612(a)(9), requires that by the third birthday of a child with a disability who is participating in an early intervention program and who will participate in the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities, an individual educational plan or a family support plan will be developed and implemented for the child. This means that the school district must convene an eligibility staffing and develop an IEP or family support plan to determine services by the child's third birthday.

If the child's third birthday occurs during the summer months, the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program primary service coordinator should initiate the transition process at least six months before the child's third birthday but certainly prior to the close of the school year to ensure that school district personnel are available. Children with disabilities who have their third birthday during the summer months are not automatically entitled to receive special education and related services during the summer. Decisions about extended school year services for children turning three in the summer are made by the IEP or family support plan team. Services are provided only if the IEP or family support plan team determines that the child needs extended school year services during the summer in order to receive a free appropriate public education. However, given the significance of intervention during the first five years of life, IEP and family support plan teams should carefully consider the impact of an interruption in services on the child's developmental progress.

Listed below are several options that may be considered in providing uninterrupted services to a child in transition from the Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program to the school district Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities during the summer:

- The school district directly provides extended school year (ESY) services
- The school district contracts for provision of ESY with either the child's current agency or local provider or a different agency or provider. The school district will fund these services using the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) or Part B funding. To accomplish this, the following must be in place:
  - A contract must be developed between the school district and the agency or local provider in accordance with Rule 6A-6.0361, FAC, Contractual Arrangements with Nonpublic Schools.
  - The child must be determined to be eligible for school district prekindergarten services for children with disabilities.
  - An IEP or family support plan must be developed by the child's third birthday.

References

Children's Medical Services Early Intervention Program Plan and Operations Guide, (1998), Department of Health, Children's Medical Services, Infants and Toddlers Early Intervention Program Unit

Appendices

FSP Date: _____

Name: _____
ID. Number: _____
DOB: _____

Transition Plan

Date this Transition Plan is expected to be completed: _____

Reason for Transition Plan: (Possible transitions are from a temporary setting to home or from one program to another.)

Potential Program/Placement/Other Options: (Healthy Start, Part H, Developmental Services, WIC, Head Start, PreK Early Intervention, PreK Disability, kindergarten, and community agencies.)

What events must occur to make this transition work?

Transition Activity	Responsible Person/Agency	Funding Resources	Target Date	Date Completed

When completing the Transition Page, a new Signature/Consent Page should also be completed.

Date and initial any changes to this page.

FSP Date: _____

Name: _____
ID. Number: _____
DOB: _____

Signature Page

Qualifies for: (Indicate programs/services for which the individual/family is eligible.)

Family Support Plan Team

ROLE	NAME	ADDRESS/TELEPHONE	MTG*	FSP COPY**

*Those persons who attended the Family Support Plan Team meeting should sign their initials in this column next to their name.
**I give permission for copies of this plan to be released to the individual(s) noted above as indicated by my initials beside each name.

I/We helped write this plan, agree with it, and agree for services to be provided. I have been told what to do if I disagree with this plan. I have been given a copy of the procedural safeguards for Part C or Part B of IDEA, if appropriate, and have had these rights and safeguards explained to me.

Signature	Relationship	Date

Date and initial any changes to this page.